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Chandler, Susan, ""Person-to-Person": A Community Service Guide for Youth Groups Visiting Senior Residences" (1989).
Intergenerational. Paper 24.
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"PERSON-TO-PERSON"

**A Community Service Guide
for
YOUTH GROUPS VISITING SENIOR RESIDENCES**

NSLC
c/o ETR Associates
4 Carbonero Way
Scotts Valley, CA 95066

**Prepared by
Susan Chandler
Interages Program Coordinator**

**"Person-to-Person": A Community Service Guide for Youth Groups
Visiting Senior Residences**

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Interages is a non-profit organization which is contracted to operate the Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center in Maryland. The Center is funded by the Department of Family Resources in collaboration with the Montgomery County Public Schools, and by private donations.

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October, 1989

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this guide is to assist you in the development and implementation of intergenerational projects in which youth groups visit senior adult residences. These "youth in service to elders" projects are designed to meet a variety of needs. Through them, young people learn to give of themselves and their time in a significant and positive way. With our mobile society, young people often do not have the opportunity to spend time with their elders; and as a result are deprived of an awareness of the aging process and of the wisdom which older people possess. Conversely, older people need a forum in which to share their rich life experience with young people. They may be isolated from other generations, or in some cases from society in general. These projects provide an opportunity for some important reciprocity between young and old participants. They allow for meaningful relationships to develop, and for teens and elders to dispel stereotypes about one another.

This guide outlines the steps which are necessary for project design. You will, of course, need to modify these suggestions based on the needs and expectations of your youth and senior adult populations. Throughout the guide, we use the term "friendly visiting". This human services term defines programs in which people from a community (in this case, young people) visit others who may be less able to be involved in the outside world. The older adults being visited may range from those who are mobile and active, to those who are frail and homebound. For purposes of this guide, we are referring to older persons who live in senior adult residences and who are more independent than a resident of a nursing home, for example. Some aspects of this guide will apply to residents of nursing homes, and it is possible to modify the program to meet the needs of that population. However, the guide does not address that population specifically.

We are basing information in this guide on our experiences with the "Person-to-Person" project, developed in 1988-89 in Montgomery County, MD by Interages in collaboration with Tony Deliberti of the Gaithersburg High School Key Club, and Nancy Evans of the Montgomery County Housing Opportunities Commission. In this project 28 students visited 10 residents of the Town Center Apartments in Rockville over a 5 month period. While the main focus of the project was friendly visiting, a number of group activities were also planned to give all participants an opportunity to interact with one another.

We hope that this guide will provide a useful tool in linking youth groups with senior adult residents. Such projects require planning and attention, but the benefits to all participants can be tremendous!

2.

INTERGENERATIONAL PROGRAMS--WHY BOTHER?

Generations Together, at the University of Pittsburgh, defines an intergenerational program as follows:

"planned activities and experiences that are designed to bring generations together for their mutual benefit. These activities and experiences must be ongoing and systematic; must continue for an extended period of time at regular intervals; and must benefit all program participants--youth, older persons, and staff."

The benefits of intergenerational programming are numerous:

For youth, intergenerational programming

- provides an opportunity for role-modeling
- helps to dispel myths and fears about the aged and the aging process
- helps prepare for adjustments they themselves will have to make to the process of getting older
- provides access to the resources, skills and experiences of the elderly
- allows the receipt of support for specific problems, plus extra support for at-risk individuals
- promotes enthusiasm for the present and future as a result of increased knowledge of the past

For older adults, intergenerational programming

- provides increased personal fulfillment by involvement in meaningful roles
- offers benefits of new relationships which may help compensate for recent loss of enduring ties such as spousal, sibling, or old friend connections
- provides opportunity for sharing of life experiences
- strengthens self-esteem and mental health
- informs older adults of a rapidly changing world from the perspective of the young

For the community, intergenerational programming

- erases stereotypes which keep age groups apart
- strengthens informal support systems
- allows for identification of common concerns
- utilizes talents of citizens of all ages to provide services
- furthers alliances between varied youth and senior adult institutions and participating individuals
- enhances the quality of life!

STEPS IN PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTING YOUR PROGRAM

The following steps will be outlined in this guide:

1. link a youth group with a senior adult residence
2. plan your program with both coordinators from youth group and senior adult residence
3. recruit seniors and youth
4. match young people with residents
5. orient youth and senior adults
6. start with opening activity
7. begin visiting
8. incorporate other group activities
9. end with the culminating activity
10. evaluate the project (monitor it throughout!)

LINKING A YOUTH GROUP WITH A SENIOR ADULT RESIDENCE

With the strong interest in the subject of youth community service, many youth groups are searching for meaningful projects in which to be involved. These groups may be based in schools, communities, or religious institutions. This sort of project may be initiated by a senior adult residence as well. It is best, but not totally essential that the youth group live near the senior adults (transportation for the young people will be a key factor here).

In choosing a youth group or a senior residence with which to collaborate, it is vital that each express a strong commitment to the project. Coordinators representing both groups need to be involved in all phases of the program.

In Montgomery County, MD, Interages' staff can assist in linking interested youth groups and senior residences and can provide technical assistance with program development and implementation. In areas outside of Montgomery County, MD, linkages may be made through contact with schools and other youth organizations, with local Area Agencies on Aging, or intergenerational centers.

4.

PLANNING YOUR PROGRAM

The planning process is vital to the success of your program. To accomplish this, you will need to form a planning committee consisting of youth and senior program coordinators, the resident manager of the senior adult building (this person's support is essential), and any other professionals who might be involved in the program (such as a social worker for the building, if such a person is on staff). It might also be useful to include a youth leader and a resident to plan with you. Their input might help you establish a more realistic plan.

It will be necessary to clearly outline responsibilities for the two program coordinators, and for any other members of the planning committee. Devising a written plan indicating responsibilities will help to give your program structure, and help to alleviate any future difficulties with regard to responsibilities.

From our experience with "Person-to-Person", we have learned that it is necessary to have a program coordinator on hand in the building when the students visit. That person should be available to answer questions and deal with any program-related situations as they arise.

Keep in mind that, although your plans will provide a solid structure from which to implement your program, you will need to approach them in a flexible manner. It may be necessary to modify plans throughout the project, as appropriate.

Your written plan should address all of the steps listed on page 3, in addition to the following issues:

1. Timing -- You will want to structure your program for at least a 6 month commitment (preferably more) on the part of students and residents. Any commitment less than that is likely not to provide enough time to establish meaningful relationships. The specific dates of the program, time and day of the week for visiting need to be established. Note: We found it useful to limit friendly visiting to an hour each week. This time seemed best for students and residents.

2. Logistics -- Issues such as transportation, parking, entry into the building are covered under "Orientation" and Attachment B 2. Be sure to communicate clearly about these issues.

3. Project Costs -- The costs for "Person-to-Person" were relatively small. They included the cost for refreshments and supplies (decorations, film, flyers, paper) at approximately \$100 over a 5 month period. Transportation to the high school also should be factored in if such a trip is planned. Group photos were provided gratis. In a project of this sort, it is most appropriate to receive in-kind contributions to cover these expenditures.

Project coordinators worked with "Person-to-Person" as part of their regular assignments. For your program, however, your coordinator(s) may need to be hired specifically for this task. Keep in mind that one coordinator should be present with the youth when they are in the building.

4. Liability Issues -- You will need to carefully research the coverage for liability of the senior adult building and the youth group, in all aspects of this program (including transportation and activities that take place anywhere in the building). Many youth groups that are sponsored by service or religious organizations have coverage through their sponsoring agency. Senior adult buildings will vary in their coverage and regulations. It is most important that this be resolved before programs are planned. If necessary, we suggest that legal advice be sought.

RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

The "Person-to-Person" students were high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors. They appeared to have the necessary maturity to act and respond appropriately in this setting. In recruiting and screening young people for this type of project, keep in mind that youth will need to handle themselves appropriately when alone with residents in their apartments. It is particularly important that the young participants (as well as residents) express commitment to the project for its duration. It should be stressed to them that this is an important commitment which will affect another person; therefore, decisions to be involved are important. It might be useful to have recruits sign a contract indicating their understanding of your expectations.

You will also need to consider such logistical issues as how the young people will get to the senior adult building weekly. In the case of "Person-to-Person", students carpooled for a considerable distance. Of course, the ideal situation is one in which the young people can walk.

Recruitment of the senior adults can be accomplished through the senior coordinator or the resident manager. In the case of "Person-to-Person", residents deemed appropriate were asked by the resident manager to join the program. You may choose to recruit senior adults through the use of flyers or letters to residents, depending on how your senior adult population best responds. If residents are hesitant, it might be useful to let them know that the students need their friendship and their life experience--they have much to offer!

6.

MATCHING YOUTH AND RESIDENTS

Matching of young visitors and residents might best be accomplished by both the youth and senior coordinators immediately after youth orientation. At that time, impressions of the teens are fresh in the coordinators' minds, and matches may more appropriately be made, based on first-hand knowledge of the teens and elders. Another tool for matching would be the information sheets indicating interests, and completed by youth and residents prior to orientation (See Attachments A 1&2). If utilizing this method, be certain that there is sufficient time and opportunity before the first visit to let students know who their assigned resident is. (Copies of residents' information sheets will serve this purpose). In turn, residents will need to know who their young visitor(s) will be.

If this method is not workable, an alternative is to make matches (using information sheets) before student orientation takes place. Youth and senior program coordinators can meet prior to student orientation, and make the appropriate matches. Orientation time can then be used to give students their assigned residents' information sheet, which will contain apartment and telephone numbers, and information about interests.

You may choose to have individual students (instead of teams) visit individual residents. In "Person-to-Person", we used teams of students, because it was felt that they would be more comfortable. (If you decide to use a team approach, assign no more than 2 compatible young people to one resident. Any more students assigned will result in overload for all involved). In student orientation, we stressed the need for them to focus on their resident/friend, and not on each other.

In some cases, it will be appropriate to inform a young person about issues related to their resident (i.e., health and behavior). It is advised that youth participants be told only what they must know, and that the issue of confidentiality be stressed.

It is entirely possible that some relationships may not work out, for the students or the residents. If this is the case, program coordinators may want to work with the partners to see if the relationship can be strengthened. It is important to be flexible in making changes, should this be necessary.

ORIENTATION FOR STUDENTS AND RESIDENTS

Orientation for all program participants is essential. It provides an opportunity for everyone to understand rules, expectations, and logistics. It also provides a forum for asking questions and expressing apprehensions.

Orientation for young people should be "short and sweet", and held in a private area of the senior adult residence, if possible. Leading and participating in the session should be the youth and senior coordinators, as well as the resident manager. You will want to provide handouts in folders (see Attachments B 1,2,&3) and have discussion which covers the following issues:

- overview of the program
- logistics (dates, times, tour of the building, parking, etc.)
- "do's and don'ts" (role play with these is useful)
- description of the building and its residents
- what students can expect (group activities, examples of visiting activities--what is and is not appropriate)
- myths and stereotypes of aging
- how to address and refer to older people
- what kinds of issues do senior adults have to deal with?
- what to do in emergencies
- what to do in inclement weather
- confidentiality (a must!)

Students should be expected to confirm by phone the night before they visit their resident. This will help alleviate misunderstandings about arrangements, and encourage communication.

Orientation for senior adults need not be so elaborate. They do, however, need to be clear on the purpose, logistics, length of time and expectations of the program. They will need to know when students will visit, and what activities are appropriate during a visit. (They need to know that students are not there to do chores, but may share in a joint cooking or gardening activity, for example). They, too, will need a forum in which to ask questions and express apprehensions.

Two important points to be stressed in senior orientation:

1. Residents must know the exact dates for the beginning, and especially for the ending of the program. Otherwise, they may consider this an ongoing program which continues indefinitely, and be most disappointed when their young person stops visiting.
2. Residents need to know that, although the students will be doing a "service", there is definitely reciprocity involved. They should be reminded that they have much to offer their young visitors. Their wisdom, life experience, and friendship are invaluable.

8.

ACTIVITIES

Visiting Activities

In this type of project, intergenerational relationships have the greatest opportunity to flourish when youth and residents can meet in residents' apartments or in a private area. They may resist this because it is more comfortable to be in a group. Most friendly visiting relationships are uncomfortable at first, but with experience, become easier to manage. You may want to design your project so that the expectation is clear that visiting will take place in residents' apartments. Keep in mind, however, that some residents and students may still want to meet as a group.

Specific activities appropriate for friendly visiting are outlined under Attachment B 3. This is by no means a complete list--there are many creative options. Simple discussion should not be overlooked as an excellent and mutually beneficial activity. (One nice touch that helped break the ice was the flower which each "Person-to-Person" student brought their resident/friend on their first visit).

Group Activities

You will want to map out any group activities to be included. These need to be tailored to your program and its participants. Some ideas used in the "Person-to-Person" program include...

--kickoff party - this helped to make program participants more comfortable when meeting for the first time. Youth and residents wore color-coded nametags, to identify partners. Group coordinators led an exercise in which participants sat in a circle, introduced themselves, and explained why they chose to be involved (a good ice-breaker).

--holiday party - with decorations and refreshments contributed by young people and residents.

--Valentines Day Dance - held at Town Center, this was used as a mid-way celebration of the program. Music was provided by the school jazz band. This was a good opportunity for press and other dignitaries to be invited.

--group photo - taken by a professional photographer, this provided a lasting memento. Photos were put in folders and handed out at the culminating party, where they were used for autographs.

--culminating activity - all participants, while relaxing with refreshments, had the opportunity to express their feelings about the experience. Certificates of appreciation were handed out to all program participants and coordinators. (Recognition of everyone involved is important!) This activity established a definite closure to the program, and helped ease the transition of the end of visiting relationships.

Another activity unique to "Person-to-Person" was a Thanksgiving Dinner for senior adults held at Gaithersburg High School. Town Center residents were transported by bus to the school where they were met by their student/friends and joined many other senior adults. Participants indicated that visiting students "on their turf" was a positive experience, and a means of encouraging reciprocity.

For your program, you may want to devise more structured group activities, which could include games (bingo, charades), creative writing or movement, or discussions of timely topics. There are many ways to creatively work with these two age groups.

EVALUATION

Program evaluation needs to be an ongoing process, beginning with the first day of your program. Informal evaluation should take place with program coordinators and participants regularly. It is important to get feedback on the question, "How's it going?". This is often the most effective means of guiding the program to meet everyone's needs.

With the "Person-to-Person" program, we also used a verbal mid-way evaluation process. We met with resident and student groups privately, and reviewed a series of questions about the program and their feelings and reactions. (See Attachment C 1). We also audio-taped these sessions, with permission of those in the groups. (See Attachments D 1&2 for evaluative comments and program descriptions).

Final, and more formal evaluation of "Person-to-Person" took place at the culminating session, when all participants completed an evaluation form (See Attachment C 2). We found this information to be useful to us in evaluating our plans, and in considering plans for the future.

Evaluating your program, both formally and informally, is a process not to be overlooked. Evaluation will provide you with the tools to modify and "fine tune" your program as it proceeds. Program participants will be your best sources of information, and will feel valued by your asking, "How is it going?"

10.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS...

As this guide indicates, intergenerational programming requires commitment and sensitivity on the part of staff, youth, and elders. It has been our experience that providing opportunities for reciprocal sharing is well worth the effort, as evidenced by these comments from "Person-to-Person" participants:

"I'd give everything I've got to experience it again"

resident

"As you know I haven't any children. I lost my son during the war. This has filled a spot and I am happy to be here."

resident

"We've been able to talk to them about things we don't talk to our parents about."

student

"I've made a lot of friends and lost a lot of pennies in Bingo."

student

"I have made two new friends. I look forward to Tuesdays."

resident



Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center

Austin Heyman
Director

"PERSON-TO-PERSON" PROGRAM

Gaithersburg High Key Club students visit Town Center residents

STUDENT INFORMATION TO GIVE TO RESIDENTS

(please print)

STUDENT'S NAME: _____

AGE: _____ GRADE: _____ BIRTHDAY: _____

SPECIAL INTERESTS/HOBBIES: _____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SPECIAL PROGRAM!



Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center

Austin Heyman
Director

"PERSON-TO-PERSON" PROGRAM

Gaithersburg High Key Club students visit Town Center residents

RESIDENT INFORMATION TO GIVE TO STUDENTS

RESIDENTS'S NAME: _____

PHONE NUMBER: _____

APARTMENT NUMBER: _____

BIRTHDAY (year not necessary!): _____

SPECIAL INTERESTS/HOBBIES: _____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SPECIAL PROGRAM!



Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center

Austin Heyman
Director

SOME DO'S AND DON'TS FOR YOUTH FRIENDLY VISITORS

PLEASE DO:

- Call to confirm your visit the night before
- Stay in touch by phone or with a note if you can't visit
- Focus on your resident/friend, and not on your youth teammate
- Speak up, speak distinctly & slowly; look directly at your resident/friend when communicating
- Feel free to share family or school photos, poetry, creative writing, or memorabilia (may be a good "ice breaker")
- Remember holidays and birthdays with cards and comments
- Be flexible and ready to follow your resident/friend's interests
- Respect confidences
- Remember the resident's right to share only what he or she wants you to know (it's your right too!)
- Find something to like and interest you about your friend--build your relationship on that
- Offer suggestions for activities for your next visit
- Be pleasant, polite, sensitive, and understanding. BE YOURSELF!!
- Report any significant changes in your resident/friend's mood or health to your program coordinators
- Bring questions or concerns to your program coordinators
- Enjoy this special experience--you are bringing the gift of friendship to someone's life...

PLEASE DON'T:

- Ever administer medications or first aid--if asked, tell your resident/friend you are not allowed to
- Transport residents in your car
- Accept money or gifts (unless cleared with program coordinators)
- Shop for your resident/friend (check with program coordinators)
- Do housework if asked to (making a cup of tea, changing a light bulb, or sharing in a cooking activity is fine)
- Visit with a cold or infectious illness
- Agree to do anything that makes you uncomfortable--tell your resident/friend you'll need to check with your program coordinator
- Make promises you can't keep
- Give your phone # to residents without checking with program coordinators first

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for Service Learning
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Prepared By Nancy Evans
Housing Opportunities Commission

PERSON-TO-PERSON Montgomery County, MD

GAITHERSBURG HIGH KEY CLUB AND TOWN CENTER

Town Center Apartments
90 Monroe St.
Rockville, MD 20850
424-5450

Jeanette La Bonte - resident manager
Jackie Mayers - resident counselor
Nancy Evans - HOC Intergenerational Coordinator

PARKING

Coming south on 355, go right on Monroe St. Go 1/2 block, then turn left into driveway. (There is a sign that says "Do not enter"; disregard this sign.)

Please do not park in handicapped spaces.

Please log your car in at the desk.

ENTRY INTO BUILDING (if you happen to come without the group)

This is a security building. Find the name and apartment number on the board inside the door and follow the instructions by the phone. It is best not to enter unless your friend lets you in. Residents are instructed not to let people they do not know into the building, so please do not ask them to.

HEALTH CONCERNS

If you have concerns about your friend's health, please talk with Jeanette LaBonte or Tony Deliberti. Even if you are not sure whether your concern is legitimate or not, it is best to ask, to make sure.

IN A TRUE EMERGENCY, CALL 911, THEN CALL THE DESK.

TELEPHONING

Please try to call your friend the night before you come to remind him/her of your visit. If you will be unable to attend, please let your friend know as soon as possible. If you cannot get your friend, leave a message at the Town Center desk.

MISCELLANEOUS

Speak clearly and distinctly, especially on the telephone.

Politeness is more important than you might think.

Focus on your Town Center resident rather than your partner.

SOME IDEAS TO GET YOU GOING

For your first visit, it may help to take something to break the ice, such as pictures of your family, a pretty flower.

Take things slowly: try to find out a bit about the person's background, interests, how you can best be of help.

Some older persons enjoy having the newspaper or magazines read to them, especially if their vision is failing. You might offer to do this for them. Occasionally, someone will ask to have his mail read. You might bring a poem, a magazine article, or a paper you have written at school to read. Share your hobbies with your friend. If you play an instrument (a portable one), bring it along and share your talent with your friend. If you have athletic awards, bring them along to show your friend. Sharing your own talents may start your friend sharing his/her talents and interests of both the past and the present.

Share your music with your friend. Bring a tape recorder with some of your favorites. Be careful, however, of playing it too loud.

Making a cup of tea, -- helping to change a light bulb: these are examples of very useful things you could do for your friend. However, if you are asked to do more than a minor job, tell your friend that you must speak to Tony or Jeanette first.

Sometimes, especially in good weather, people like to take short walks.

Receiving a card in the mail would be greatly appreciated by almost anyone.

The above ideas are just to get you thinking. What you do will, of course, depend on you and your friend. Your time spent with someone who may feel lonely and isolated is the most important component of friendly visiting.

MYTHS AND REALITIES OF OLD AGE

A myth is a belief whose truth or reality is accepted uncritically. Unfortunately, there are a number of myths concerning the aged which influence the treatment of elderly persons.

Some Common Myths.

Myth: Older people are sick and disabled.

Reality: In fact, 86% of those over 65 have one or more chronic conditions but these are generally not disabling - the majority are able to cope with or adapt to the demands of their environment.

Myth: A sizable percentage of the elderly live in institutions.

Reality: In fact, the great majority of elderly people live in the community (95%).

Myth: All people, when they grow old, become senile.

Reality: In fact, senility is not inevitable nor even probable.

Myth: "You can't teach an old dog new tricks."

Reality: In fact, older persons are not too rigid to learn and are capable of new adjustments when demanded by the situation.

Myth: An older person is beyond the age when s/he can contribute to society.

Reality: In fact, older people have many valuable assets such as time and energy, experience with life, and skills gained throughout life.

Myth: Most older persons are pretty much alike.

Reality: In fact, in their attitudes, abilities, personalities and interests, older people are different, reflecting the same variety found in younger age groups.



Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center

Austin Heyman
Director

"PERSON-TO-PERSON"

Questions for 2/7/89 Midway Evaluation by Town Center Residents

Students - Relationships and Behavior

1. When visiting with students each week in your apartments, what kinds of activities do you do? (Would you prefer more structure?)

Favorites?

Least favorite?

2. How would you describe your relationship with your visiting students?

3. Have any stereotypes about teens been changed?

Any new understandings?

4. Do students call regularly?

5. Do students visit regularly?

6. Do students focus on you or on each other?

7. How would you describe your students' manners?

8. Any negatives we should know about? (Specific to your students and/or general to the program)

Any positives?

Group Plans

1. What is your favorite activity?
2. What is your least favorite activity?
3. Would you plan more/less/different activities in the future?

Overall Program Evaluation

1. Would you participate in a similar program again? Why?
2. What would you change?
3. This program will end March 21. Did you like the length of the program? (5 months)
4. Is this a good program in general? Is it worth it? Why?
5. Are there any anecdotes you would like to share?



Interages

Attachment C2

Montgomery County Intergenerational Resource Center

Austin Heyman
Director

Teen _____ Senior Adult _____

"Person-to-Person" Evaluation Form

I. To what extent were program objectives met? Please circle.

Objectives:

Not at all Adequately Very well

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. To provide time and opportunity for ongoing relationships between teens and senior adults | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. To provide group activities which brought students and residents together positively | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

II. To what extent were the following logistics accomplished?

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. Orientation activities prepared me for the program. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| B. The program was well-planned and organized. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| C. The atmosphere was comfortable for establishing new relationships. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

III. Please respond briefly:

- A. What aspect of the program was most beneficial? Why?
- B. What aspect of the program was least beneficial? Why?
- C. Have you noticed any change in your view of senior adults/teens since participating in this program?
- D. Would you participate in a similar program again? Why?
- E. Residents only: Would you like Interages to notify you about other intergenerational program opportunities?
If "yes," name & phone #, please _____

Additional comments:

Name (optional)_____

Interage program builds bridges between young and old

by Rita M. Wysong

To the casual observer, this might have been just six teenagers chatting and laughing together. Actually, only four of them were young people—the other two were over 80 years old.

The occasion was a St. Valentine's Day party at the Town Center Apartments in Rockville. Red cut-out hearts and white paper snowflakes hung from the ceiling. There were refreshments on the table and two young men with guitars provided music for dancing.

This was just one more event sponsored by Interages—the "Person-to-Person" program—that has proven to be so successful in Montgomery county. Austin Heyman, executive director, Susan Chandler, program coordinator, Nancy Evans, Housing Opportunities Commission, and Jeanette LaBonte, resident manager of the apartments, greeted guests as they arrived at the party.

This program, which matched 28 members of the Key Club at Gaithersburg High

School with 12 Town Center residents, has been in operation since last October.

I had an opportunity to talk to one of the "matched" groups. Jennifer George and Amy Linsenmayer, both seniors, had been originally matched with Elna Schenick, while Mark DiGiovanni and Chris Daly, juniors, were matched with Bob, her husband.

As the students arrived at the party, they came over and kissed and hugged the Schenicks. Elna smiled and remarked about her "nice" daughters. Bob said, "This is my 'adopted son,'" referring to Chris, and added, "I'll claim them all for my children."

The six of them got caught up on the latest news. Elna told them that Bob had given her a beautiful Valentine's Day gift, five African violets. "Are you going to dance today," Jennifer asked Bob. His wife explained that he had caught a cold and his back was bothering him a little.

"You know you're not 16 anymore," she gently reminded him. In spite of his

back, however, he was later seen taking a few twirls each around the dance floor with Jennifer and Elna.

For the past four months, these six people have enjoyed a unique relationship; and recently the students helped to plan a first wedding anniversary party for the Schenicks.

The students recounted how they had been teamed with this particular couple. Basically, the sponsor went through the names and chose two students to pair with one senior depending on interests and hobbies.

Bob Schenick interests included good conversation, playing pool and cards, mainly rummy. The boys have enjoyed coming over after school on Tuesdays to play pool with him. They compete against the girls and usually win.

Elna, Jennifer and Amy hit it off immediately. All three like to go shopping. "We do the 'girl' stuff," they said. After homecoming festivities, the girls brought in pictures to share with Elna. They also

enjoy listening to music—mainly church music—with her.

The students remarked how Bob and Elna always have goodies in their apartment when they come to visit. After this program is completed at the end of March, and after the girls go off to college this fall, they still plan to write letters and keep in touch with Elna.

Why are these busy young people interested in a program such as this? The students had some ready answers. Some in the program have grandparents who live in other states, and the idea of elderly people in their lives is a positive one.

During the first month when the six of them got together it was a period of adjustment—of becoming acquainted—they recalled. Then the four students became friends. After that, they and the Schenicks began doing things together as a group.

Attachment D1

Mar. 1, 1989

Gazette





"PERSON-TO-PERSON" . . . A TEEN'S PERSPECTIVE

From last October-March, 28 enthusiastic teens from the Gaithersburg High School Key Club participated in the "Person-to-Person" program with senior adult residents of the Town Center Apartments. Students visited their older friends weekly; and shared games, discussions, and group activities, including a Valentines Dance and an anniversary party for Town Center's newlyweds, Bob and Elna Schenick. The program was coordinated by Interages in collaboration with Nancy Evans of the Housing Opportunities Commission, and Tony Deliberti, sponsor of the Gaithersburg High School Key Club.

Program coordinators as well as participants have deemed the project to be a success. Teens and residents established meaningful relationships. In the words of one Town Center resident... "I'd give it all to experience it again."

Because such "youth in service to elders" projects are designed to be reciprocal and mutually beneficial, we asked student participants to give us their perspective of "Person-to-Person". The following comments were prepared by Key Club member Matt Axen:

For 28 students of Gaithersburg High and the residents of Town Center Apartments in Rockville, a sad day has arrived. Their "Person-to-Person" program has come to an end after 5 months. Wait! Why is this program so great? What do they get out of it? Why do they do it?

To both the senior citizens as well as the teenagers the last 5 months have been a time of loving, friendship, and hope as well as learning, sharing, and becoming more aware of concerns of another generation. This has been a time to look forward to and the Tuesday afternoon visits to Town Center will long be missed.

"We give them company and friendship, and they bring me the joy of sharing," says Jennifer George. "They are my friends," adds Chris Daly. The desire to have a grandparent or a grandchild and fill an empty spot in one's life is also a benefit of "Person-to-Person". "They take the place of grandparents who live too far away to visit often," says Mike High.

Not all teenagers are bad people, and not all senior citizens are grouchy and senile. They need each other. A good, unexplainable, heartwarming feeling is brought to both the seniors and the teens. With all the love which this program has brought, this will leave a lasting impression on all who have participated.

Marc di Giovanni says, "I receive the wisdom of others and bring them youth." Several students said they thought they would only make the senior citizens happy, but it turned out to be mutual happiness. Natalie Rhooms said that "learning of another generation was rewarding." Lakshmi Pakalapati emphasizes that she gets "the knowledge and experience she cannot get from books."

Sharing, loving, fun times with friends is what "Person-to-Person" is all about. Kim Martin agrees, saying, "it's a chance for the young to enjoy the seniors and vice-versa. I really care about them." These times will long be remembered as happy, fun visits with friends--new, special friends. Age no longer matters, and the people who took part in the "Person-to-Person" program have learned a lot, and loved a lot, and we are all the better because of it.





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